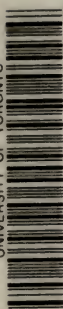


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AIDAN,

THE APOSTLE OF THE NORTH



ALFRED C. FRYER

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The Apostle of the North.

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AIDAN,

The Apostle of the North.

BY

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TO

THE RIGHT REV. ERNEST R. WILBERFORCE, D.D.,

THE FIRST BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE,

This Volume

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E.



THE] favourable reception accorded to “Cuthberht of Lindisfarne” has encouraged the Author to publish a companion volume on *St. Aidan*, “the Apostle of the North.” The title *Apostle of the North* has been frequently applied to the first great missionary Bishop of Lindisfarne, and the Author notices that Mr. Grant Allen speaks of Aidan under this title in his *Anglo-Saxon Britain*. This little book is not only an attempt to sketch the noble life of the first Bishop of Lindisfarne, but also to depict the character of the heathenism which Aidan and his brave followers had to confront.

The original authorities most largely con-

sulted have been, first and above all, Bede's "Ecclesiastical History," and, to a less extent, the "*Vita Oswini*," and the "*Vita Sancti Columbæ*."

Among modern historians, the Author owes his acknowledgment in the first and highest degree to Professor Bright, whose "Chapters on Early English Church History" have been frequently consulted. He is also indebted to the Rev. Dr. Maclear, Mr. Kemble, and Mr. J. R. Green, as well as to many other writers whose works are quoted in the footnotes.

The labour of the Author has been rendered more easy by the use he was permitted to make of the valuable library of the Owens College, by the favour of Principal Greenwood and the Library Committee.

WILMSLOW,
CHESHIRE, *October*, 1884.

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AIDAN,

THE APOSTLE OF THE NORTH.

CHAPTER I.

KING OSWALD AND THE BATTLE OF "HEAVEN FIELD."

E open the volume of Northumbrian history at a sad and darksome page—at a time when it seemed likely that the toil and labour of noble-minded, generous-hearted men were rudely to be swept away. "It seems," it has been said, "an almost universal law of mission work, that the definitive victory is not won without a temporary reaction of more or less severity. The powers of darkness, seen and unseen, the

spiritual wickedness which constitute the real background of every form of heathenism—these, with all whom they can enlist in their ranks, gather themselves up, as with the energy of despair, for a last and decisive struggle with the kingdom of light. A fierce tempest of wrath sweeps over the Church, and the patient work of years perishes, or seems to perish, in an hour.”¹

This was a time, Bede says, that was “hateful to all good men.”² The beloved Edwin, King of Northumbria, had been slain at Hadfield³ by Cadwalla, King of Gwynedd (North Wales), and the heathen Penda, King of Mercia. Then followed “a great slaughter throughout the Church and nation of Northumbrians.” In the words of Bede: “No longer might the cups of brass hang safely by the roadside wells; or a woman with her babe traverse the kingdom of Edwin from sea to sea,

¹ Archbishop Trench’s “*Mediæval Church History*,” p. 34.

² Bede, ‘H. E.’ iii. 1.

³ The Welsh call this place Meiceren. *Ann. Camb.*

without dread of insult."¹ The royal palace and church at "Campodonum" was burned, and the cruel Welsh king "spared neither women nor children, but put them to torturing deaths, raging for a long time through all the country, and resolving he would be the man to exterminate the whole English race within the bounds of Britain," and although he was a Christian by profession, yet he paid no respect to the Christian religion. To these terrors of invasion were added the horrors of civil war. Northumbria was split into the two provinces of Deira and Bernicia, of which the former fell to Osric, Edwin's cousin; the latter to Eanfrid, one of the exiled sons of Ethelfrid. Both monarchs abandoned the Christian faith, and shortly afterwards were slain by Cadwalla.

This was indeed an ill-fated year, and a time of sorrow and distress. Paulinus fled from his post, and deserted the Northumbrian Church in the hour of her greatest need, when he saw

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' ii. 16.

the head of Edwin brought to York.¹ Then it was that he thought it right to escape persecution, and he persuaded himself that "he had a primary duty to Ethelburga—the widowed queen—whom he had escorted to Northumbria, although a brave thane, named Bass, was at hand to guard her return."² But the Christians, although they were "cast down," were "not destroyed," and James "the deacon,"³ otherwise known as "the chanter," from his skill in Church music, was alone left to conduct the services of the Church.

When autumn shadows were stealing over the land, James, who lived on the Bernician frontier, would hear with joy that a Christian prince, a younger brother of the apostate Eanfrid, was determined to make a stand for his throne and his people, and save Northumbrian independence if it were possible.

This famous prince was Oswald, "the good

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' ii. 20. The body was afterwards recovered, and buried at Whitby; iii. 24.

² Bright's "Early English Church History," p. 129.

³ Bede, 'H. E.' ii. 20.

king," the saint, who was honoured and loved by the forefathers of the sturdy fishermen, miners, and dalesmen of the North Country.

A few miles from Hexham, and not far from the Roman Wall,¹ is to be seen a humble chapel, built on the rising ground, and dedicated to St. Oswald. It is a beautiful spot, commanding a fine view of hill and valley, wood and river,—a grand and noble country, less changed than many another historic spot famous in the annals of the North. There seems little doubt that it was here that Oswald, "with an army, small in number, but fortified by faith in Christ," took up their position.²

The night before the battle Oswald dreamed that St. Columba appeared to him and assured him of victory.²

¹ See Burton's "*Hist. Scot.*" i. 21 ff. Not far from St. Oswalds can be seen the northern foss of the wall, also the southern vallum-line and the stations and forts. The Cymric Chronicles gave the battle the name of Catscaul, or Cad-ys-gual, the battle of the wall. See Skene's "*Celt. Scot.*" i. 245.

² Oswald told this afterwards to Abbot Seghine; *Adamn. v. col. i. 1.*

When the winter morning dawned¹ he caused a cross of wood² to be hastily made, and having it placed in a hole dug for its reception, he held it firm with his own hands while his men heaped up soil around it. As the morning mist rolled up the valley the tall king, with his long face and thin beard,³ stood near the symbol of his faith which pointed heavenward, and bade his soldiers kneel down with him and "entreat the true and living God, who knew how just was their cause, to defend them from the proud and fierce enemy."⁴ Then they arose and charged Cadwalla's superior forces. That charge was overpowering. The foe turned and fled far away down the steep slope into the valley

¹ Freeman and Lingard date the battle 635, but it appears to have been about December, 634. See Bright's "Early English Church History," p. 181, note 6.

² "That cross stood till the time of Bede, some 150 years after, and had become, like Moses' brazen serpent, an object of veneration. For if chips cut off from it were put into water, that water cured men or cattle of their diseases." Kingsley's "Hermits," p. 289.

³ Tradition thus describes him. Hist. Transl. S. Cuthb. 6, in Bede's Works, vi. 409 (Giles).

⁴ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 2.

below until they reached the Denisburn,¹ as Bede calls it, most likely a brook near Dilston, somewhat eastward of Hexham. Here Cadwalla ended his fierce life, and an old saying,—

“Cadwalla’s slaughter checked the Denis flow,”

has long been remembered.

This was the Battle of “Heaven Field,” as it was called in after times. Few battle-fields can have greater interest for Englishmen, for not only did the Welsh scheme to re-conquer England receive its death-blow, but the cause of Christianity was to triumph from that day in Northumbria.

Oswald now became the king of the united provinces of Bernicia and Deira, and in thinking of him we instinctively think of Alfred. Like Alfred he was kind and gentle, and yet, like Alfred, he possessed great strength and force of character. He became to his people

¹ Hen. Hunt. iii. Smith, p. 720, thinks that Erringburn was Denisburn, north of St. Oswalds. See Bruce’s “Hist. of the Wall,” p. 142.

more than Edwin had been, for he came to his nation in her weakness, "in the prime and glow of a pure and noble manhood." "On the one hand," says Professor Bright, "Oswald was so able a captain and ruler that he extended the area of Bretwalda's supremacy until it even included the Picts and Scots.¹ On the other hand, as devout as if he lived in a cloister, thinking little of half a night spent in devotion,² and accustomed from such habits to keep his palms instinctively turned upward, even while sitting on his throne; thus, 'wont, while guiding a temporal kingdom, to labour and pray rather for an eternal one;' ³ withal, as generous and affectionate as he was pious, 'kind and beneficent to the poor and to strangers,' humble of mind and tender of heart, amid all that might have 'lifted him up to

¹ Bede, iii. 6, "Denique omnes nationes," &c. So that Oswald anticipated the over-lordship of such a "Basileus" of Britain as Athelstane or Edgar. See Freeman, i. 547. "Totius Britanniae imperator," Adamnan, i. 1.

² Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 12. Comp. iv. 7.

³ Bede, 'H. E.' i. c.

arrogance.'"¹ In truth Oswald was indeed a prince of men, and he attracted such a general enthusiasm that he was the object of universal admiration and love by his devoted subjects.

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 6. Comp. Oswin; Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 14.

CHAPTER II.

CORMAN'S MISSION IN NORTHUMBRIA.



OSWALD had spent many years of his exile in the island mission station of Iona.¹ There he had found a welcome and a home, and the good Columban monks had taught him the precepts of Christianity. Now, he was the king of Northumbria, and believing that he had overcome the Mercians and Britons through the mercy of Him whose sacred symbol he had raised on the field of battle, he wished to reconvert his people to the true faith. So he sent a messenger to Seghine, who was then abbot of

¹ The name was originally I, Ia, or Hii, or, as it was known in later times, Icolumkill, "Hy of Colum of the Churches." "The name Iona arose from a misprint of Iona, the adjective form used by Adamnan, the root of which was Iow." See Maclear, "Conversion of the West, —the Celts," p. 110 ; Reeves' "Adamnan," p. ccxvii.

Iona, and entreated him to send a missionary to teach his people.

Seghine at once complied with Oswald's wish and sent him a bishop whom Scotch tradition has called Corman.

The missionary left his sea-girt home and set out at once for Northumbria, where he endeavoured for a time to preach the Divine Word. But Corman thought the rude heathens of Durham and Yorkshire were indocile, and at length returned in disgust from the mission station. "*Hard with hard makes no wall*," says Fuller, quaintly, quoting an old proverb; "and no wonder, if the spiritual building went on no better, wherein the austerity and hardness of the pastor met with the ignorance and sturdiness of the people." Disappointed with the ill-success of his mission, the austere Corman returned to Iona, disgusted with the failure which he attributed to his flock and not to his own preaching. "The intelligence," says Dr. Maclear, "was received with sorrow, and the brethren of Hy (Iona) grieved for the lot of the Northum-

brians, and were still eager to help them.”¹ “It is no use,” Corman told the assembled monks, “to attempt to convert such people as they are.” Then was heard a gentle voice full of remonstrance, saying :—“ Methinks, brother, thou hast forgotten the apostle’s maxim about milk for the babes. Didst thou not deal too rigidly with those untaught minds, and expect too much, and too soon, as the fruit of teaching too high for them to follow ? ”

All eyes were turned on the speaker, a humble monk named Aidan. He was a native of Ireland, and had sprung from the royal line of Eo-chaidh Finn, of which St. Bridig was a collateral descendant.² The same name was borne by several Irish and Dalriadic kings.³ All the assembled members of that

¹ “Conversion of the West,—the English,” p. 61.

² Dr. Forbes’ “Kalendar of Scottish Saints,” p. 269.

³ Forbes’ “Lives of St. Ninian and St. Kentigern ;” Reeves’ “Life of St. Columba,” p. 254, 264, 287 ; Laing’s “Cronykel of Wyntown,” p. 324 ; Burton’s “Hist. Scot.” i. 279.

solemn chapter agreed that Aidan was the right man to undertake the work. So he was consecrated bishop,¹ most likely by one or more bishops who lived at Iona, and one fair summer morning in the year A.D. 635, he bid adieu to the community he loved so well, and sailed away from Iona, with a fond remembrance of the "Great Fort" and the "Angel's Mount," where the good Columba had prayed to God and thought how he could win the heathen to the faith of Christ.

¹ "That he was worthy of the episcopate, because he had in an eminent degree the grace of discretion, which is the mother of virtues." Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 6.

CHAPTER III.

LINDISFARNE.



TEN years after Paulinus had fled from York, Aidan arrived in Northumbria. He was a true son of the Celtic Church, and did not choose his home in the ancient capital of York where Paulinus had lived, and where the British Bishops had their seat long before his days; but like Columba, who lived on the wild Isle of Iona, and David,¹ who abode on the lonely Menevia, Aidan chose Lindisfarne, a place which Bede describes as "twice a day contiguous to the mainland of Northumbria, and twice a day like an island enclosed in the sea, according to the ebb and flow of the tide."² Sir

¹ Freeman, "Norm. Conq." i. 349.

² Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 3.

Walter Scott, in his poem on "Marmion,"¹ points this out:—

"For, with the flow and ebb, its style
Varies from continent to isle;
Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,
The pilgrim to the shrine finds way;
Twice ev'ry day the waves efface
Of staves and sandall'd feet the trace."

We must remember that this is a poet's description, and going there "dry-shod" is scarcely accurate, for the path from Beal at low water is "at best wet and splashy."² The "Island-peninsula" of Lindisfarne, as an historian aptly terms it, derives its name from a stream, the Lindis, which enters the sea at a point on the Northumbrian coast directly opposite, and from the Celtic word "Fahren,"—a recess, sufficiently indicative of its wild and secluded character. "No sacred spot in Britain," says Professor Bright, "is worthier of a reverential visit than this 'Holy Island' of Aidan and his successors."³ This little islet

¹ Marmion, C. 2.

² Murray's "Durham and Northumberland," p. 227.

³ Bright's "Early Eng. Ch. Hist." p. 137.

measures about two and a quarter miles from East to West, and one and a half from North to South, and it is about a mile and a half distant from the Northumbrian coast. Little changed is the prospect which Aidan and his followers gazed upon, twelve hundred years ago. The blue Cheviots still raise their rounded summits over an arm of the sea to the North, while to the South is seen the majestic fortress-crowned promontory of Bamborough, where rose

“King Ida’s castle, huge and square,”

built on the site, it is said, of a Roman castle by King Ethelfrith, and called “Bebbanburgh,” from Bebb, his first queen. The eye wanders over the ocean to the Farne and Staple Islands peering out of the blue deep off Bamborough headland, and the mind dwells on the British heroine, whose name will be for ever associated with those bleak and lonely isles.

The natural strength of the position probably guided Aidan in selecting Lindisfarne as his

future home, and, moreover, it was only an hour's sail distant from the royal fortress of Bamborough. Doubtless Aidan loved to hear the sound of the ocean wave, and the rush of the wild wind; they would remind him every day and every hour of another islet home where he had so often heard the solemn roar of the great Atlantic.

On entering on his new work, Aidan never thought of asking for any sanction from Rome or Canterbury; "He was a missionary bishop sent from the neighbouring Scotie Church, at the request of the Northumbrian king; this was his position, and he would never have admitted the principle that all episcopal jurisdiction must be derived from Rome,¹ or that a pope had a right to make an English archbishop supreme over 'all the bishops of Britain.' Yet Rome² acknowledged him as a canonised bishop."³

This Celtic mission not only extended over

¹ Collier, i. 203.

² See Alb. Butler, 31st August.

³ Bright's "Early Eng. Ch. Hist." p. 138.

a wide area, and possessed historical interest, but a personal attraction seems to rivet our love on this brave, noble man, whose gentle words and sterling character won the hearts of the rough north-countrymen with a stronger power than an enchanter's wand. The zeal of these self-sacrificing men for Christ was unbounded. "I see them coming!" says an eloquent writer, "not counting their lives dear unto themselves, clad in the armour of purity and innocence, to contend with strong seas and barren shores. . . . I see them coming! the leader and his twelve undaunted associates and disciples! Happy number! like those of old, who, by the power of the weakness of God, trampled upon strength, and under the ignominious sign of the cross conquered the honourable world. They approach the shore; they land; the meek have taken possession of the unknown rock upon which their sandals tread. The cross, emblem of self-denial, agony and shame, carries the armour of an invisible panoply. Onward advances the sacerdotal host. The isles obey; kingdoms are conquered;

the word has gone out into all lands.”¹ In this spirit Aidan and his successors went forth to preach ; in this spirit they toiled ; in this spirit they triumphed.

¹ Gordon's "Monasticon," i. 575.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ISLAND HOME.



O see Lindisfarne as it was when Aidan and his brave band of followers first set foot on its desolate shore, we must sweep away the massive ruins of the grand old Saxon abbey, with its "rainbow arch" and ponderous columns; the poor fishing village, and the historic castle, "perched on, or rather built into, the summit of a singular and most inaccessible pile of rock,"¹ which Scott describes as—

"The castle with the battled walls,
The ancient monastery's halls,
A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile
Placed on the margin of the isle."

But the ocean waves still boom on the eastern strand with awful grandeur, and the

¹ See Howitt's "Remarkable Places," vol. i. p. 181.

sea-birds swoop down and scud over the white-crested billows with unearthly groanings and wild piercing cries.

The buildings which the missionaries erected on the south-western corner of the island, were of the simplest character, and were, most likely, surrounded by a *vallum* or rampart.

The most important building was the humble church, a simple structure of oaken beams, thatched with a species of coarse grass, probably the "wiry bent," which still grows abundantly upon the island.¹ The church was called the *sacra domus*; or, sometimes, *ecclesia* or *oratorium*. Attached to it, and communicating with it by a door, was a sacristy where the bell was kept which summoned the brethren to the house of prayer.

Beside the oratory several other buildings were required by the little community, such as a dwelling-house for Aidan, and the cells for the brethren, and those set apart for the entertainment of strangers; the kitchen with its various cooking utensils, the refectory, and

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 3.

a room we may call the library for the preservation of the books. Of a ruder description were the wattle huts which served as byres for the cows, the granary with its grain; and, perhaps, like Iona, Lindisfarne might possess a stable with a cart and horse. Then there would be a smithy, and a carpenter's workshop, where the brethren built their boats, and the rough beams of timber would be floated at high tide from the mainland to the island.

The monastic system, which Aidan brought with him from Iona, presents so many features of interest, that it may be well to dwell at some length on this subject.¹

The brethren regarded themselves as *Soldiers of Christ*, and each member on enrolment became pledged to withdraw from the cares of the world and spend his life for the propagation of the Gospel. The measure of obedience exacted from them was clearly defined, "*Usque*

¹ See Dr. Reeves' edition of Adamnan's "Life of Columba," which contains all that is known of the monastic system of the Columban Church, and is given with great accuracy and critical judgment.

ad mortem," Even unto death. Hence at the shortest notice they were ready to set forth on long journeys, and to brave the perils of flood and field, of wild beasts, and still more of savage men ; or, if at home, they were content to put their hand to any labour that might be required of them even in the most inclement weather. Body and mind were both exercised—one in out-door labour, the other in diligent study. They enjoyed their goods in common. Personal rights in property were absolutely disclaimed, according to Columba's rule : "Be naked, in imitation of Christ, and in obedience to the precepts of the Gospel." Almsgiving was specially commended ; but the disciples of Columba exercised discrimination in selecting their objects of charity, and while hospitality formed a marked feature in their practice, itinerant begging was discouraged. Celibacy was enforced, and humility stood first in the rank of virtues.

Whenever a guest presented himself at Lindisfarne, Aidan and his brethren went forth to meet him and bid him welcome. Then he

was taken to the oratory, and thanks were offered to God that he had arrived in safety, for that was an age when the traveller had to cross sedgy marshes and vast solitudes, where the clusters of rude huts were few and far between ; that was an age when the traveller had good reason to fear a foe, and keep his spear grasped firmly in his hand ready for the first alarm. From the oratory he was conducted to his lodging, where water was supplied to wash his feet. If, perchance, the day on which he arrived was a fast day, then the fast was relaxed in his favour.

The elder brothers were called “seniors ;” those who, from bodily strength or previous occupation, were fitted for out-door labours, were termed “working brethren ;” the younger members who were receiving instruction, were styled “juniors.” When the brethren were admitted into the community, they took a solemn monastic vow on bended knees in the oratory, and were tonsured from ear to ear—that is, the fore part of the head was shaven bare, and the hair was allowed to grow only on

the back part of the head. Strangers were received at Lindisfarne who, under the names of proselytes, penitents, and guests, sojourned there for indefinite periods, or dwelt in the neighbourhood of the little colony.

As seats of instruction, the monasteries were most useful, for many young men repaired to them to be taught. In some of these communities fifty scholars, and in others a larger number, were accommodated. In Ireland and Scotland, these scholars were regarded as inferior members of the clerical order. Subsequently, they seem to have occupied the position of cottars simply, living in the immediate neighbourhood of the monastery, upon lands which were set aside especially for their support. They built their huts of turf and branches of trees, and lived principally upon grain or vegetables, which they cultivated for themselves.¹

The duties of the brethren were simple, consisting chiefly in preparing food and in manufacturing such implements or articles as

¹ Book of Deer, p. cxxxix.

were required for domestic use or field labour. Farming, on a large scale, as afterwards practised by monks, was impossible to the Columban clergy, and it is doubtful whether they were solely dependent on their own efforts, or were supported by the contributions of their converts. Probably they cultivated as much land as yielded the desired return of grain or vegetables, and reared sheep and cattle in sufficient numbers to supply themselves with food. Some of the community would manufacture the various articles required for personal and domestic use, and the *pincerna*, or butler, who had charge of the refectory and all its appointments, and the *pistor*, or baker, were very necessary members.

The food was of the simplest description, consisting of bread, sometimes made of barley, milk, fish, and eggs. On the arrival of guests, or on Sundays and high festivals, fresh meat was served—mutton, or even beef. The general practice was to dine in the evenings; but a noonday repast was also permitted. In this repast, the rule of Columba was less strict

than that of Comgall, which guided the Irish Church ; it resembled the Benedictine formula, by which dinner was appointed for twelve o'clock, with supper in the evening. A strict fast was observed on Wednesdays and Fridays, except in the interval between Easter and Whitsunday, and Lent was kept rigorously as a preparation for Easter ; and during this season, the fast was prolonged every day except Sunday, till evening, when a light meal, consisting of such food as bread, diluted milk, and eggs, was taken.

Each brother of the little community was clad thus : an under garment, called a tunic, of a white material, was worn next the skin, and over this was drawn the *cuculla*, or cowl. This consisted of two parts—a hood, or cape, and a body, or skirt. The *cuculla* was generally made of undyed woollen stuff of a coarse texture, and retaining its natural colour. In cold weather, or when travelling, a warmer garment—*amphibalus*—of the nature of a cloak, was worn. Out-of-doors and at work, the brethren wore sandals ; these were taken

off when they sat at meals. They occupied separate cells, in which each bed was provided with a mattress and pillow ; as they slept in their clothes, coverlets were unneeded.

Occasionally one or more of the community would practise extreme asceticism, and some of these Columban monks were known to pass a certain time with the body immersed in cold water, and in that condition recite the whole or part of the Psalter. It was usual when anyone, whether lay or cleric, wished to enter upon a special course of discipline, to depute some distinguished saint as his *ammchara*, soul-friend, or spiritual director, under whose guidance it was fulfilled. When any offence was committed, the penitent was required, on his knees, in the presence of all the community, to confess his sins, and promise amendment. When he had done this he was absolved, either on the spot, or enjoined to observe a lengthened period of discipline.

The sign of the Cross was very generally used as a "saving sign." The pail was crossed before milking, and tools before they were

used; and it was generally believed that the sign of the Cross had power to banish demons, unlock doors, restrain river monsters, and lay low wild beasts. Even at sea, the cruciform arrangement of the masts and yards was regarded as boding a favourable voyage.

Daily services were performed in the chapel, to which the brethren were summoned by a bell—those only who were engaged in the necessary duties being exempted from attendance. Sundays and saint-days were observed by rest from labour, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and the use of better food. The Lord's Day was held to commence at sunset on the preceding day, and its services, performed at stated intervals, included Prime, Tierce, Sext, and probably None, but the chief service was the Celebration, sometimes at Prime, or at Sext, when the *cantores* chanted the wonted office of "the Sacred Mysteries of the Eucharist," or the "Mysteries of the Sacred Oblation." For this rite wine and water were mixed in a chalice by the deacon, and the priest standing before the altar, consecrated

the elements. If several priests were present, one was invited to assist the officiating priest, and to break bread with him as a token of equality. But if Aidan officiated, he broke bread alone, as a sign of his superior rank. The brethren then approached the altar and partook of the Eucharist.

Easter was the principal festival, the period between Easter-day and Whitsunday being known as *dies paschales*. Then, indulgences were more especially permitted; Christmas was attended with similar privileges, while Lent on the other hand, was observed strictly as a period of fasting and preparation for Easter-tide.

The Sacrament of Baptism was administered to adult converts, after due instruction in the faith. Occasionally, when Aidan was on a missionary journey, he would administer it to a whole family, or sometimes to an individual a short time before death.

Holy Orders were conferred only by Aidan, as he was a bishop. Young men were admitted to the diaconate while they were students,

and it was part of their duty to wait upon the priests at the altar.

The burial of the dead was considered a religious duty, involving a regard to the future as well as to the past. After death the body was laid out in the cell, wrapped in linen clothes. There it remained for several days and nights, during the obsequies, in the course of which the praises of God were sung. It was then swathed in a fine white linen shroud, placed in a coffin, borne to the grave in solemn procession, and reverently buried.

In the training of every monk, the study of the Holy Scriptures formed an important part. The Psalter received especial attention, and the brethren were required to commit the whole, or large portions, to memory. Some slight knowledge of Latin and Greek might be acquired, sufficient for the transcription of monastic rules or other documents. The circumstances of the lives of the Columban monks were unpropitious to the cultivation of deep learning, and in this respect they compare unfavourably with churchmen of a later age ;

yet the biographer of Columba gave proof of his classical attainments, and Cummin's "Paschal Epistle" shows that the writer was versed in ecclesiastical learning.

Such is a brief outline of the life and discipline which Aidan brought with him from Iona. How far it was beneficial is difficult to determine. As pioneers of industry and art, the monks were certainly useful. "What was on the side of the monk's life," says Dean Church, "was its definite aim and its hope of reward. It was a distinct self-dedication to the service of the great Master, and it looked for the great Master's special approval."¹ The principles on which they regulated their lives were, in the main, excellent. Self-discipline and self-control were the chief objects sought; and to use the words of a modern writer,² "In an age when there was so much lawlessness, . . . they upheld and exhibited the great, and then almost original idea, that men needed to rule and govern themselves; that they could do it,


¹ "Life of St. Anselm," p. 71.

² See Introduction to Dr. Reeves' "Adamnan."

and that no use of life was noble or perfect without ruling. . . . Rude as they were, they were capable of nurturing noble natures, single hearts, keen and powerful intellects, glowing and unselfish affections." Their weaknesses were those of their age, but the influence of their virtues has long survived them, for, in the religious earnestness of Scottish Lowlanders, may even now be remarked the result of teaching in the remote past, by the wandering disciples of Iona and Lindisfarne.

CHAPTER V.

THE LINDISFARNE SCHOOL.

E read in Bede's "Ecclesiastical History"¹ that Aidan established at Lindisfarne a school for English boys, twelve in number,² and like St. Anskar when he began his work in Denmark, and Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand, and Bishop Patteson in the Melanesian Islands, he sought "to train them to be in their turn evangelists to their own people."³

It was here that Wilfrid received his first instruction. He was the son of a Northumbrian thane, and was born in 634—the year

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 26.

² Twelve was regarded as a sacred number. In the introduction to Reeves' Introduction to Adamnan's "Saint Columba," lxxi., a great number of instances are given.

³ Maclear's "Conversion of the West,—the English," p. 63.

when King Oswald gained the victory of "Heaven Field." At the age of thirteen his father bade him God-speed, and sent him to the Northumbrian Court. Queen Eanfled liked the "handsome boy of quick intellect and graceful bearing," and she obtained for him the royal permission of "serving God"—the "phrase then used," says Professor Bright, "with an unhappy restriction of meaning for monastic life." Cudda, one of Oswin's nobles being afflicted with paralysis had determined to retire from the Court, and pass the remainder of his days at Lindisfarne; and under his care, and as his attendant, Wilfrid entered the island-monastery. Here he remained for several years, and Eddie in his biography gives this glowing picture of the youth of nineteen, shortly after he had left Lindisfarne, "pleasant in address to all, sagacious in mind, strong in body, swift of foot, ready for every good work, with a face that in its unclouded cheerfulness betokened a blessed mind."¹ Wilfrid while he was at Lindisfarne was very studious, and we

¹ Edd. 3, 4.

read that "he was loved by the other boys as a brother, by the seniors," and doubtless by Aidan, "as a son."¹

Another of those boys who received instruction in Aidan's school was Chad or Ceadda, the youngest of the four eminent brothers, Cedd, Cynebil, Celin, and Ceadda—who in later years became the apostle of the Mercians and "whose name" says the Rev. Baring Gould, "ought not to be forgotten as long as virtues of chastity, humility, and a forsaking all for Christ's sake are esteemed among men."²

Besides these two youths who distinguished themselves in after years as missionary bishops, the gentle Eata was a scholar in this famous school, and throughout his useful life he was true to the teaching he received at Lindisfarne, being, as Bede describes him, "the gentlest and simplest man in the world."³

We can picture the youths at their daily work in their school-chamber, with their waxed

¹ Edd. 2.

² "Lives of the Saints," 2nd March.

³ Bede, iv. 27.

tablets, styles, pens, and inkhorns, while upon the wall hung leathern satchels holding those books which the brethren needed on their mission journeys. Some of the boys are perhaps learning to read and to write, others are repeating a portion of the Psalter to one of the brothers, and possibly Aidan himself is helping some of these Northumbrian lads in their study of the Holy Scriptures, while he, in his turn, learns from them words and phrases of their language.

When the boys were further advanced they acquired the rudiments of Latin and helped the brethren to write some of the service books which so many new mission churches would require. This needed much skill and patience, for some of these early manuscripts had great labour bestowed on them and perhaps not a few were embellished with beautiful ornamentation.

Often would the brethren tell these English boys of Columba and how he converted King Brude, and was loved by the people in spite of the efforts of the Druid priests ; and oft would

they tell them of Iona, that holy island in the western sea, from whose humble cells on its wave-washed rock issued forth brave men to preach the Gospel of Christ in lonely hamlets far and wide among heathen peoples, confronting superstition, idolatry, and immorality with the purer life of Christianity.

The good brethren would teach them the "Creed," "Our Father," and doubtless they would learn the grand old hymn of Columba called "*Altus Prosator*"¹ which begins :—

"The Father exalted ; ancient of days, unbegotten
Without or beginning or origin : ever existing
Is and shall be : to infinite ages of ages.
With whom is Christ, sole begotten ; with whom, too,
the Spirit
Co-eternal in glory, in Godhead alike everlasting.
We preach not three Gods : one God we proclaim and
one only—
Showing our faith in Three Persons: eternally glorious."

Or perhaps they would learn to repeat some

¹ This hymn is found in the *Liber Hymnorum*. The above translation is by Dr. Todd, with a few alterations by the editor of *Lyra Hibernica Sacra*.

portions of the metrical prayer of St. Patrick¹ called *lorica*, because, as a coat of mail protects from bodily hurt, its recitation was supposed to shield from spiritual peril.

“I bind to myself to-day—

The strong power of the invocation of the Trinity,
The faith of the Trinity in Unity,
The Creator of the Elements.

“I bind to myself to-day—

The power of the Incarnation of Christ, with that of
His Baptism,
The power of the Crucifixion, with that of His Burial ;
The power of the Resurrection, with the Ascension ;
The power of the coming to the Sentence of Judgment.

“I bind to myself to-day—

The power of the love of Seraphim,
In the obedience of Angels,
In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,
In the prayer of the noble Fathers,
In the predictions of the Prophets,
In the preaching of Apostles,
In the faith of Confessors,

¹ See Todd's "St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland ;" James Clarence Morgan's spirited translation in the *Lyra Hibernica Sacra*; and Dr. Petrie's "Memoir of Tara." Tradition affirms that St. Patrick recited the above hymn when on his way to meet the Druidical fire-worshippers at Tara.

In the purity of Holy Virgins,
In the acts of righteous men."

Or, perhaps, Aidan would desire them to learn this beautiful stanza from the same ancient prayer :—

"I bind to myself to-day—
The Power of God to guide me,
The Might of God to uphold me,
The Wisdom of God to teach me,
The Eye of God to watch over me,
The Ear of God to hear me,
The Word of God to give me speech,
The Hand of God to protect me,
The Way of God to prevent me,
The Shield of God to shelter me,
The Host of God to defend me,—
Against the snares of demons,
Against the temptations of vices,
Against the lusts of nature,
Against every man who meditates injury to me,—
Whether far or near,
With few or with many."¹


Or the words of the martyr Codoe may have been taught to these youths by these good Columban monks :—

¹ This is a very ancient hymn, and in the seventh century it was believed to have been the composition of St. Patrick.

“ Without knowledge, no power.
Without knowledge, no wisdom.
Without knowledge, no freedom.
Without knowledge, no beauty.
Without knowledge, no nobleness.
Without knowledge, no victory.
Without knowledge, no honour.
Without knowledge, no God.
The best of attributes is humility.
The best of occupation, work.
The best of sentiments, pity.
The best of cares, justice.
The best of pains, that which a man takes to
 make peace between two enemies.
The best of sorrows, sorrow for sin.
The best of characters, generosity.”

CHAPTER VI.

HEATHENDOM.

T may be well, in this chapter, to give a sketch of the heathenism which Aidan and his brave band of missionary monks had to confront.

The primitive faith of the Teutons was extremely simple, and it taught a belief in one supreme god, called *Allfadir*—the “living and awful being,” the “author of everything that exists.” He is the Lord of the universe and created heaven and earth, and made man, and gave him a living soul that could not perish, though his body was consumed on the funeral pyre.¹ To “the Eternal” was attributed infinite power and boundless knowledge ; and He might only be worshipped in the solemn forest,

¹ Thorpe’s “Northern Mythology,” i. 229.

or the consecrated grove, for He could not be confined within the enclosure of walls, nor dare His devotees represent Him by any likeness to the human figure.¹

This pure primitive faith, this lofty sublime theism of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, "was too refined," says the Rev. Dr. Maclear, "to retain a lasting hold on the mind and conscience," and gradually its distinctness faded away, and delirious fancy added other deities so profusely that "the air, the sea, the rivers, the woods, and the earth became so stocked with divinities, that it was easier, as an ancient sage remarked, to find a deity than a man."²

The silent stars, the sun and moon, the hills, the forest trees, and springs of bubbling water, were considered to be worthy of adoration, while the song of birds, the dream of sleeping men, the falling thunderbolt, and even the neighing of horses were each believed to be some portent of another world. Hence arose a

¹ Tacitus "Germania," ch. ix.; Grimm's "Deutsche Mythologie," Einleitung, pp. 9-11.

² Sharon Turner's "Hist. of Anglo-Saxons," i. 531.

regard for the interpreters of dreams, enchanter, and the raisers of storms.¹ "All nature," says an eloquent writer, "had a voice for the imaginative Teuton. The skies, the woods, the spring, the well, the lake, the hill were his books, his oracles, his divinities."

In the course of time man lost his fear when he beheld the mighty powers of nature and the working of her wondrous laws, and then he no longer quailed before the howling wind and the boisterous storm. He had grown strong. But now that nature is under his feet, a new race of divinities arises, the disposers and avengers and subduers of nature, and then follows the period when nature-worship is allied to a complicated system of human divinities.

Giants were supposed to exist before these gods were born, and lived, and died; and Odin, Wuoten, or Woden, was the oldest of these new divinities. We see his name in the fourth day of the week, Wodnes-dæg, or Wednesday, and the word Woden is found in so many names

¹ See Appendix to Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. 523-532.

of places in England¹ that we know his worship must have extended far, and have been current throughout the island. We find upon the Continent traces of his worship, and it is equally probable that he had in England temples, images, and religious ceremonies, and that he was the supreme god of the Saxons in England, as he had been in Germany.

In time Woden became the father of a large family, and his power was divided among a number of gods and goddesses. These divinities sprang from him, and they shared some portion of his greatness.

Thor or Thunor, the Thunderer, was the chief of the gods in strength and might. At first he was not generally worshipped in

¹ Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. 343. *Wanborough*, formerly *Wódnesbrorh*, in Surrey; *Wanborough*, in Wiltshire; *Wednesbury*, in Staffordshire; *Wisborow Hill*, in Essex; *Woodnesborough*, in Kent and Wilts; *Wembury* in Devon; *Wanstrow* (*Wodnestreow*), in Somerset; *Wansdike*, in Wiltshire; *Woden Hill*, on Bagshot Heath; *Wonston*, in Hampshire; *Wedneshough*, in Lancashire; *Wansford*, in Northamptonshire; *Wanstead*, in Essex; are some of the many places in which his name occurs. See Isaac Taylor's "Words and Places," p. 218, 2nd ed.

England,¹ but in the word Thursday we see his name perpetuated. Thor was an elemental deity, powerful in the storm "as well as in the fertilising rain;" his weapon was a hammer, which seems to denote the crushing thunderbolt.

Besides Thor, the Thunderer, there were many other divinities. Tiw,² the Dark-god, the lord of battle, the giver of victory, the bravest of the gods, was worshipped by our

¹ "We find traces of the worship of this deity in the names of *Thundersfield* in Surrey, two places called *Thundersleigh* in Essex and one in Hants, as well as *Thundridge* in Herts, and *Thunderhill* in Surrey. . . . In some cases it is probable that the name may have been derived from some Viking who bore the name of Thor. The Anglo-Saxon names, however, are not liable to this ambiguity, since it does not appear that any Anglo-Saxon—more timid and more reverent than the Northman—ever dared to assume the name of the dreaded Thunor."—"Words and Places," p. 219. See Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. p. 347.

² Tiw gives us the name *Tiwes-dæg* = Tuesday. See Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. p. 351. *Tewesley*, near Wanborough, was anciently *Tiwesleáh*; and, perhaps, the Tiwingas, who gave their name to *Tewing* in Herts, acknowledged this god as their founder.

Anglo-Saxon forefathers. Freyr¹ has many beautiful legends connected with his name, and it was supposed that he travelled through the land in a car with a choir of fair and beautiful priestesses, and wherever he went there was peace and plenty. Freyr was the god of fertility, seedtime and harvest, and of fruitfulness and marriage; and the beast sacred to him was the boar. Baldr,² whose myth is the most beautiful in the whole compass of Northern Mythology, was most probably worshipped in England under the name of Pol or Pal.³

¹ Freyr was probably worshipped in all parts of Europe, and the "Edda" has a beautiful story of how he languished for the charming Gerdr.

² Mr. Kemble says that there are a few places in which the name of Balder can be traced. Thus, Baldersby in Yorkshire, Baldeston in Lancashire, Balderesleah and Baldheresbeorh in Wiltshire. Of these, the two first may very likely have arisen from Danish or Norwegian influence, while the last is altogether uncertain. See Edmund's "Traces of History in Names of Places," p. 170.

³ There seem to be a few places in which the name of this deity can be traced: *Polebrooke*, in Northamptonshire; *Poleworth*, in Warwickshire; *Polestead*, in Surrey; *Polsden*, in Hampshire; *Polsdon*, in Surrey. Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. p. 367.

Baldr¹ was the god of light and splendour, of grace and manly beauty, and his worshippers believed that he was "mild and eloquent, uttering just and irrevocable decrees." Sætere,² the "placer and disposer," gives his name to Sæteres-dœg, the seventh day of the week.

From the gods we now turn to the goddesses, but our actual knowledge of their worship in England is very scanty.

The goddess Fricge, the spouse of Woden, who was the guardian of ways and boundaries, gives her name to the sixth day of the week. Little is known of her worship in England, but on the Continent it was supposed that she accompanied Woden to battle, that she had the knowledge of the future which she never revealed, and that she lived in a beautiful palace in heaven. Fricge was that venerable goddess who watched over the fair spring-time and the sprouting seed, with her hand-maidens—*Fulla*, "plenty;" *Hlin*, "warmth;" and *Gna*, "the sweet and gentle breeze."

¹ Baldock (Herts) = "Baldr's Oak;" Balderton (Notts) = "Baldr's town;" Baldontoot (Oxford) = the teotha or tything of Baldr.

² Some derive Satterthwaite (Camb.) = "Sætere's Clear-

Bede mentions the goddesses Hreda, to whom March was dedicated, and Eostre or Ostara. It has been thought that Hreda was not that stern, severe deity which some have supposed her to be, but that she was a great and glorious goddess, and perhaps she was Frigge, Woden's wife, in some form or other. It is, however, certain that Hreda was a Saxon goddess, and that at stated periods sacrifices were offered to her. Eóstre or Eástre, "whose name must be etymologically connected with East, *oriens*," was the goddess of brightness, splendour, and light, the goddess of the morning beams, of the new awakening year, when the sun first begins to recover power after the gloom and darkness of winter.¹ The name of this mild, gentle divinity is retained in the name of the great festival of the Church which commemorates the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour.

In the ancient poem of Beowulf we are made acquainted with a monstrous fiend, named

ing," and Satterleigh in Devonshire, from the name of this god. Edmund's, p. 278 ; Kemble, i. 372.

¹ Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. p. 375.

Grendel, and his mother. They were gigantic, supernatural beings, who fed upon men, and could not be wounded by earthly weapons. Grendel appears to be one of those violent native deities; and Grimm identifies this monster with Loki, the "calumniator and back-biter of the gods," the "grand contriver of deceit and fraud," the evil-bringer, and, in the end, the destroyer of the gods.¹ At first Loki was the friend and the associate of the gods; he was united to them in the bond of brotherhood, and his power gave them victory in many an encounter. But alas! like Lucifer, he fell. Why the gods parted with Loki in anger we do not know; but he pursued them with never-ending malice, until at length he caused the death of Baldr, the representative of goodness. He was then bound, and "cast beneath the worlds, the poisonous snake hung over him, distilling torturing venom, and it was only in the twilight of the gods that he could break his chain. Loki was believed to be fair and beautiful in form, but evil in mind,

¹ *Mythologie*, p. 222.

and full of craft and perfidy. The three beings which constituted his offspring were, the first, Fenriswolf, the second, Midgard's-worm, the third, Hel,¹ the ruler of the cold and joyless underworld, where the warm rays of the sun never penetrated, and where joy and pleasure, song and feasting, were unknown. The realm of Hel was Hades, "the invisible underworld,"—the world of shadows,—far removed from the glorious Valhalla, where Woden receives and banquets the heroes who have fallen in battle, so that they may ultimately aid him in the conflict against the giant powers of darkness. Nastrond was a place of torment and punishment, the abode of the perjurer and the secret murderer, filled with foulness and peopled with poisonous snakes, full of gloom, darkness, and cold.

With the fall of Loki and the death of Baldr, it has been observed that "the milder natural religion" of the Teutons grew more savage, and

¹ "The name," Isaac Taylor remarks, "seems to be confined to Yorkshire. It may possibly be present in the names of *Hellifield*, *Hellathyne*, *Helwith*, two *Henleys*, *Healigh*, and *Helagh*, all in Yorkshire."—"Words and Places," p. 221, 2nd ed.

warlike; the benign Allfadir, "the father of gods and men," became the "god of battles," "the terrible," "the father of slaughter." The Teuton believed that the gods possessed like passions to his own, but that they were high above him in power; he trusted that they would protect him, so long as he honoured them and sacrificed victims upon their altars, and that if he only performed his duty in this present existence, Valhalla would be his future home.

We have mentioned that our forefathers, in the patriarchal period of their history, worshipped the deity in the solemn silence of the forest and in the consecrated grove; but when they adored more than one god, an elaborate ritual gradually grew up among them, and in the age of which we are speaking every settlement had a temple to the gods.

These temples and their idols have long ago disappeared, for shrine and image¹ were alike

¹ If the idols were not always made of wood, it is probable that they were usually constructed of it, for "we have no single extant example of a Teutonic idol."—Maclear's "Conversion of the West,—the English," p. 15.

made of wood ; yet from the old Sagas we can gather how they were constructed. The temple consisted of two parts, which we may describe as a nave and a shrine, surmounted by a wooden palisade. The sanctuary or shrine was built round and arched, and within, in a half-circle, stood the idols on a raised platform, and before them, in the middle of this half-circle, was the altar. Upon it were placed the holy fire, constantly fed and never extinguished, the blood-bowl where the blood of the slaughtered victims was caught, the blood-twigg with which the worshippers, as they stood in the outer court, were sprinkled, and the holy ring upon which all solemn oaths were sworn. All Teutonic races sacrificed the horse, and they also offered to their gods sheep, oxen, and swine. The blood was caught in the blood-bowl, and with the blood-twigg it was sprinkled not only on the idols, but even on the worshippers, to hallow them. The fat was always reserved for anointing the images, while the head of the slaughtered victim was offered to the gods, and the hides were hung on trees in the sacred grove.

When the sacrifice was completed, fires were lighted down the nave, and the caldrons, which contained the flesh, were hung over them. Then the worshippers gathered round the fires, and when the feast was prepared they partook of the broth and ate the meat. On the right of the nave sat the chief of the settlement in his high seat, and when he had blessed the repast, he "bade the guests drink, in honour of the gods, from cups of mead or beer. The first bowl, for victory and strength, was drained to Woden; the second, to Freyr, for peace and a good harvest; a third, to Thor; and so on. The last cup was drunk to the memory of friends and kinsmen dead and gone."¹

Human sacrifices were not common, although they were allowed by Teutonic races. They were offered at times of national calamity, "as sacrifices of atonement," or as propitiatory sacrifices for the dead. "Near every gathering-place of the tribe," a spot closely

¹ Maclear's "Conversion of the West,—the English," p. 17.

connected with the temple, "stood the stone of sacrifice, on which the backs of these victims were crushed and broken, and the holy pool in which another kind of human sacrifice was solemnly sunk."¹ The victims for these religious rites were usually slaves or criminals.

Such was a fragment of the system which embodied the religious yearnings of our forefathers before the days when they were taught the Gospel of Christ from the lips of Celtic and Roman missionaries. "In no age," says Mr. Kemble, "can man be without the great ideas of God, of right, of power, of love, of wisdom; but an age that has not learned to feed upon abstractions, must find the realisation of those ideas in the outward world, and in a few familiar facts of human nature. It strives to give an account of itself, and the result of its efforts is a paganism, always earnest and imaginative, often cruel and capricious, as often gentle, affectionate and trusting—for even in spite of cruelty and caprice

¹ Dasent's "Norsemen in Iceland," p. 191; "Burnt Njal," l. xiii.

the affections will have their way, and trust will find a home.”¹ This Teutonic creed possessed an earnestness and depth which demands our careful study. It had the hope of a future life, the belief in a state of happiness or punishment after death, and the Teuton shuddered when he thought of *Nast-rond*.² We can dimly trace in this mythology, the aspiration of the worshipper after a deliverer from the thralldom of death. *Baldr*, the god of light and beauty, was imprisoned by *Loki* in the shadowy realm of *Hel*, the goddess of the dead, and even *Woden* failed to rescue him. Still, the earnest thinking Teuton believed that after the “twilight of the gods,” and the destruction of this wicked world, *Baldr* would return

¹ “The Saxons in England,” i. 439.

² See notes to Canto ii. of Strong’s translation of Tegner’s “*Frithiof’s Saga*.” *Woden’s* sentence :—

Riches perish,
Kinsmen perish,
Thou must perish too ;
This, I wot,
Shall perish not :
Doom to mortals due.

in triumph, and Allfadir's glorious kingdom would be again renewed.

"Then unsown
the swath shall flourish
all bale mend, and
back came Baldr ;
with him Hodr dwell
in Hropter's palace,
shrines of gods
the great and holy.

* * *
there the just shall
joy for ever,
and in pleasure
pass the ages."¹

Christianity met this mythology of the Teutonic nations and taught those thinking peoples that there was no dim hope of an ultimate restoration of all things, but that it was an established truth ; that the beautiful story of Baldr was only a myth, and the conqueror of death was Jesus Christ, the true "Light of the world," who had placed His foot upon the grave, and had opened wide the gates of heaven. Augustin was sent from the


¹ See Kemble's "Saxons in England," i. 411.

“city on the seven hills,” and Aidan from the sea-washed rock of Iona on the same sacred errand, with the same holy Gospel of love ; and the “tenderness, the sweetness, the earnestness, the solemnity, the awfulness of the Christian faith sunk into their hearts, diffused itself through their life, allied itself by indestructible bonds with what was dearest and what was highest ; with their homes, their assemblies, their crowns, their graves—all this is marked in their history, and reveals itself in their literature.”¹

¹ Dean Church’s “Influences of Christianity,” p. 113.

CHAPTER VII.

MISSION LABOUR.

O those who longed for retirement and loved contemplation, Lindisfarne, like the sea-girt Iona, offered an inviting retreat. But the lives of Aidan and his fellow-labourers were not spent in seclusion, for it was only by unremitting toil they could hope to sow the good seed; and to their self-imposed task they applied themselves with unwearied diligence. Hunger, cold, poverty, vicissitudes of every sort were familiar to them. Their journeys were performed on foot; their fare was meagre; their garb humble. Though often the guests of kings, they remained men of lowly hearts and simple habits; and, in the pages of Bede and other early chroniclers, the "golden deeds" of Aidan and his successors are lovingly recorded.

Aidan laboured for sixteen years (from 634 to 651) among the sturdy race of dalesmen, fishermen, and miners, who formed the population of Northumbria.¹ With love and gentleness he felt for the people committed to his charge, and in simple words and homely thoughts he taught his hearers the Divine Word. Oswald worked with him, with all the zeal of an ardent soul,² as Sigebert had laboured with Felix among the East Anglians, and the Celtic language he had learned at Iona was of great use in interpreting Aidan's missionary addresses. This was a sight which Bede might indeed call "truly beautiful."

Aidan and his devoted followers wandered from the Humber to the Forth, teaching from house to house. These missionary journeys were usually³ performed on foot, and as the little band pursued its way, the teacher and

¹ See "Cuthberht of Lindisfarne," chapter ii.

² "Vita Oswini," Surtees Society, 1838; Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 5.

³ See story of Aidan, and the gift he received of a horse, on page 98.

his disciples meditated on texts of Holy Scripture, and recited portions from the psalms ; or, perhaps, the solemn woods re-echoed with the music of their voice ; and, perchance, a passing wanderer might hear them sing some of those sacred hymns dear to the monks of Iona.

“ From the far rising of the sun
To where his utmost course is run,
Sing we the Christ of virgin born,
With kingly praise his name adorn.

“ Though from eternity His sway,
Our flesh He made His mean array ;
Redeeming thus from endless death
The race that owed to Him its breath.

“ The spotless Virgin’s favoured womb
Of grace Divine becomes the home ;
And wonders, passing human thought,
Unknown and secret, there are wrought.

“ The maiden’s bosom, pure abode,
Becomes a temple meet for God ;
An earthly partner all unknown—
The Word her offspring proves alone.

“ The mother’s thankful arms enfold
The Babe whom Gabriel had foretold ;
Whom, though unborn, with prophet’s eye
The Baptist John could yet descry.

- “In manger-shed, amidst the kine,
All lowly lies the Babe Divine ;
Milk from a mother’s breast is given
To Him who feeds the birds of heaven.
- “The heavenly choir their anthem raise—
Angels unite their Lord to praise ;
While to the shepherds of the field
The God Incarnate is revealed.
- “Thou, hostile Herod, whence those fears ?
Is it that Christ on earth appears ?
As though He grasped at earthly things,
Who rules o’er all, the King of kings !
- “The Eastern Magi, from afar,
Eager pursue the guiding star ;
Led by its beam, true light they seek,
And own their God with offerings meek.
- “The matron crowd beholds, aghast,
To earth its infant offspring cast ;
Thus, through the tyrant’s rage, doth rise
To Christ a spotless sacrifice.
- “Where flows the river’s cleansing flood
The Lamb of God all meekly stood,
By His obedience to atone
For our transgressions—not His own.
- “His wondrous acts for Christ have won
His name—the Eternal Father’s Son ;
Before His glance disease hath fled,
To life come forth th’ awakened dead.

-
- “The water owns a power Divine,
And, conscious, blushes into wine ;
Its very nature changed, displays
The power Divine that it obeys.
- “Lo, the centurion comes to crave
Recovery for his dying slave ;
Such faith can pitying answer claim,
And quench e’en fever’s scorching flame.
- “See Peter, walk the swelling wave,
His Lord’s right hand outstretched to save ;
The path, which nature’s law denies,
To trusting faith still open lies.
- “Four days within the noisome grave
Lay Lazarus. He comes to save.
Rent by His word are death’s strong chains,
As life and light its prey regains.
- “Deep crimson stains, a noxious flood,
Pollute the garment dyed with blood ;
A pleading suppliant draws nigh,
And straight the flowing stream is dry.
- “A sufferer, palsied in each limb,
Pours forth his earnest prayer to Him ;
No pause ensues, no long delay—
Instant he bears his couch away.
- “Now hath the traitor basely sold
His Master for the bargained gold ;
The kiss of peace he dares impart
While treason lurks within his heart.

“Vainly the Just, the Holy pleads,
His back beneath the dread scourge bleeds;
Nailed to the cross, on either hand
The vilest of the robber band.

“The Sabbath dawns, and to the tomb,
With unguents rare, fond women come;
To whom the angel voice is sped,
‘Seek not the living ’midst the dead!’

“Now raise we all the joyous strain,
With sweet, triumphant, fond refrain;
The Christ hath conquered! Death and Hel.
Redemption’s mighty victory swell!

“Quenched is the dragon’s fiery zeal,
Crushed is the lion ’neath His heel;
To heaven ascending, Thou hast trod
The path of glory, Son of God.”¹

Whenever they met a wayfarer—rich or

¹ This beautiful translation of “*A solis orbus Cardine*” is by Canon MacIlwaine, and may be found in the *Lyra Hibernia Sacra*, p. 13. . The author, Sedulius, was a poet and theologian, and flourished in the middle of the fifth century. He was an accomplished scholar, and wrote not only poetical but also prose works. The above poem gives us a continuous historical account of the chief events in the life of our Saviour. It is alphabetical, and numbers twenty-three stanzas, each beginning with one of the letters from A to Z.

poor—they spoke to him. If he were a follower of Woden they endeavoured to win him to the faith of Christ with gentle loving words, but if he were a Christian they bade him God-speed and encouraged him to be strong, and stand fast in the faith.

As the work grew and prospered, the monastery of Lindisfarne was enlarged, and willing helpers came from Iona to carry on the missionary labour wherever Aidan bade them go. Then these brave, self-sacrificing, noble-hearted men went forth, strong in the Faith, and wandered over the bleak moorland and through pathless forests, building churches and founding schools where English children were taught, on the land which Oswald gave them.

Very literally needed these monks to pray that “Christ would guide their feet into the way of peace” as they wandered through the gloomy forest glade. Knights like Sintram might ride through such forests trusting to God and their good swords, but the monk, unarmed, and with no compass to direct him, had to traverse its pathless solitudes of oak and

alder, beech and pine, where peasants dare not venture for fear that they would never come back again. Nor shall we overlook the fact that our forests then were the haunts of wild and savage beasts, and still wilder and more savage men—thieves and outlaws—living in hollows of aged oaks, and dank and darksome caves. Woe to the man or maid who chanced to fall within their fiendish power, for hunger, rage, and lust, were the only laws they knew. Martyrdom is in truth the gate of eternal bliss, but nevertheless, were they brave who went out to face it.

This was not all these monks had to fear, for the terrors of an unseen world were around them and these were very real to the men of the seventh century. They imagined that the spirits of the streams and the trees hated them, and longed to bring about their death, while the fair elf-maidens sought to lure their souls from the path of duty. Then as they walked on, reading their gospels and reciting psalms, they fancied that Satan and all his devils lurked in the wild storm, and would hurl the rotten

branch, or the rock from the towering crag, upon their defenceless heads.

Well might they pray that God would guide them as He guided Abraham of old, and save them, for they could not save themselves. "We talk still, thank heaven, of heroes," says Charles Kingsley, "and understand what that great word should mean. But were not these poor monks heroes? Knights-errant of God, doing His work as they best knew how. We have a purer Gospel than they: we understand our Bibles better. But if they had not so heroically discharged their duty, should we in this day have inherited those privileges which we now so happily enjoy? It was a wise old saw of our forefathers, 'Do not speak ill of the bridge that carries you over.' These men were pioneers of civilisation, and we owe more to the monk-adventurers than perhaps many of us are aware of."

What did the building of these churches, these schools, and these monasteries mean, not five hundred years, but more than twelve hundred years ago? It meant work—work for

the busy hands of industrious men ; it meant clearing away the forest trees and underwood for an industrial colony, where every member spent his life in doing the utmost in his power for his fellow-men. All talents were thrown into the common work, and preaching to the heathen, doctoring the sick, teaching in the schools, or carpentering, farming, and gardening were all performed in the same humble, lowly spirit, imbued with love to God and love to fellow-man. "What Christianity and civilisation they knew (and they knew more than we are apt now to believe) they taught freely ; and therefore they were loved, and looked up to as superior beings, as modern missionaries, whenever they do their work even decently well, are looked up to now."¹

The zeal, self-sacrifice and devotion of these men must have sunk into the hearts of the Northumbrian people, and have spoken as strongly as actions could speak that their faith was of heavenly origin. No wonder that the heathen were attracted by these bold pioneers

¹ See "Monks and the Heathen."

of Christian civilisation, for the monks from Iona were a united brotherhood, and exhibited an energy of purpose stronger and deeper than the followers of Woden and Thor had ever seen before. In Aidan and this band of missionary monks, "they first saw the example of life ruled by a great and serious purpose, which yet was not one of ambition or the excitement of war : a life of deliberate and steady industry, of hard and uncomplaining labour ; a life as full of activity in peace, of stout and brave work, as a warrior's was wont to be in the camp, on the march, in the battle. It was in these men, and the Christianity which they taught and which inspired and governed them, that our forefathers first saw exemplified the sense of human responsibility ; first learned the nobleness of a ruled and disciplined life ; first enlarged their thoughts of the end of existence, first were taught the dignity and sacredness of honest toil. These great axioms of modern life passed silently from the special homes of religion to those of civil employment ; from the cloisters and the cells of men, who,

when they were not engaged in worship were engaged in field-work or book-work.”¹

These Christian colonisers who drained the marshland, tilled the heath, and cleared the forest, gave to the Northumbrian a new law of life, new habits, and new society. Christianity entered into the social life of the people, and the Thane found that he was not the sole ruler of his homestead; for it told him that it was unlawful for a follower of Christ to act with cruelty to his serf, or put away his wife. It taught him, also, that he was not so much as ruler of himself, for it forbade him to think of revenge, and it plainly declared that drunkenness and gluttony were sins.

The Teuton felt the innovation in every prominent event which marked the various changes from the cradle to the grave. No longer was the babe dragged through the earth for Hertha, and no longer was the warrior's body consumed on the funeral pyre, and laid like that of Beowulf under a mound on a windy headland.

¹ Dean Church's "Influence of Christianity," p. 127.

It has been happily remarked, that these monastic establishments, each liberally endowed with land, and each engaged in tilling the soil without, and cultivating peaceful arts within, were, in fact, little islands of civilisation dotted about in the wide sea of Teutonic barbarism.¹ *Laborare est orare*, was the monastic motto, and where the monks settled in the woodlands by the rivers, waste land was reclaimed, forests were cut down, and the wolf and the beaver were driven away. In this rough and barbaric England, these men performed a great and noble work, not only as teachers and preachers, but as civilisers and colonisers.

On the other hand, we are bound to acknowledge that the conversion of the Teuton was imperfect. It is comparatively easy to fling down an image, but it is hard to sweep away time-honoured superstitions from the minds of men. The worship of Woden, Thor, Frige, Tiw, Pol, and Sætere might be overcome, but it was long before the new faith could extir-

¹ Grant Allen's "Anglo-Saxon Britain," p. 103.

pate the Easter, May-day, and Midsummer fires, rubbing the sacred flame, running through the embers, and throwing flowers upon the fire. The Midwinter, and the Autumn feasts were still celebrated; and when the boar's head was a portion of the Christmas fare, the new converts would recall that the wild boar was sacrificed to Frige, while the sheaf, decked gay with flowers, was still an emblem of the Teuton god of the harvest-home, and the ploughman as he ploughed and drove the first furrow, still sang to Mother Earth, "although the prayer, though christened as it were by the new faith, remained in substance a cry to the earth goddess of the old."¹ These and a thousand like superstitions long lingered in the minds of our forefathers.

Heathenism was woven into the very life and thoughts of the people, and the old well-worship, tree-worship, and stone-worship, belief in elves, magic and soothsayers, and even efficacy of sacrificing to idols, long retained a power over the lower classes of the people.

¹ Green's "Conquest of England," p. 10.


It was not so much a settled policy of the missionary, as the spirit of the age, which exchanged heathen ceremonies for Christian rites. Heathen festivals were disguised in a Christian garb, and the name of a Teutonic goddess is mentioned every time we speak of the joyous festival of Easter, and the days of the week are still called after the gods of the Teuton races. Many of these new rites were looked upon by the heathen as a mere exchange, thus "the remembrance-cup, once drank at the banquet in honour of Thor and Woden, was substituted for a similar salutation of the apostles; and in place of the image of Freyr, they caused the staff of some saint to be carried round the corn-fields, to drive away the field-mice and the caterpillars."¹

Still there is much to be thankful for, and a Church which produced men like Eata, Cedd, and Chadd, was neither barren nor unfruitful.

¹ Maclear's "Conversion of the West,—the English," p. 178.

CHAPTER VIII.

OSWALD THE SAINT.

IDAN was not often a guest at the royal table, but when he was invited he always brought with him one or two of his attendant clergy, and after taking "a little refreshment, he would make haste to go out, in order to read with his brethren, or to pray,"¹ for he had "a church and a bedchamber" not far from the "royal city" of Bamborough.² Bede tells us, however, that one Easter Day Aidan sat by the king as he feasted in his royal hall, and "a silver dish of royal dainties was set before them on the board. They were just about to stretch out their hands³ to bless the bread," when a

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 5.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 17.

³ Professor Bright says that this implies that the king was to join with the bishop in this benediction.

Thane entered, "whose charge it was to relieve the poor, and informed Oswald that a great crowd of poor folk, assembled from all the country-side, were sitting in the street begging alms from the king." Without even tasting the meat, Oswald bade the attendant carry it to the poor, and break the vessel into pieces, and divide it for their benefit. Aidan seized the royal hand and blessed it, saying, "May this hand never grow old."¹ The beggar for one instant participated, says Sharon Turner, in the enjoyments of a king, and rank was, in that fierce and proud day, admonished to look with compassion on the misery which surrounds it.²

How often do we find in history that failure

¹ Bede says ('H. E.' iii. 6) that the hand was kept in a silver casket in St. Peter's Church, at Bamborough, and remained there in his days, undecayed; Simeon of Durham ("Dun. Ecc." i. 2) declares that Swardebbrand, a monk of that church, who, had "recently" died, said that he had often seen this white hand undecayed. Nennius called this king "Oswald Llanigwyn, the "white," or, perhaps, the "fair, hand."

² Sharon Turner's "Anglo-Saxons," i. 364.

follows success, and a period of conquest is succeeded by defeat. This circumstance was noticed in the opening chapter, where reference was made to the battle of Hatfield, and now once more is presented this sad realisation of the law of missions.

Oswald had one relentless foe, whose long reign is a succession of battles against the Cross. Penda was the rallying-point of heathenism, which, prisoned as it was to the central districts of the country, fought desperately for life.¹ Oswald was involved in a war with this ferocious, daring monarch, and "the South-Humbrians," and he had succeeded in wresting the district of Lindsey from the Mercian, when the forces of the Christian king met their pagan foes, on the 5th of August, A.D. 642. The decisive battle was fought at a place called Macerfield. The precise locality is unknown. Makerfield, near Warrington, and Mirfield, in Yorkshire, have been suggested; but it is now generally agreed it was in the neighbourhood of Oswes-

¹ Green's "History of the English People," i. 50.

try,¹ in Shropshire, that the hosts met on that fatal morn.²

In reading of Macerfield we naturally think of Hatfield, where a Christian king was slain and heathenism became victorious. On Macerfield Oswald fell, "hemmed in by armed foes," and his last breath was a prayer for his people, "Lord, have mercy on their souls." The ferocious Mercian king cut off the head, hands, and arms of his noble victim, and exposed them on wooden stakes;³ but the next year they were rescued, and taken to Northumbria. The hands were placed in a silver box, and kept in the Church of St. Peter's, on the rock of Bamborough.⁴ The head was carried to Lindisfarne, where it was interred by Aidan,

¹ "Id est Oswaldi arborem," Giraldus. Itin. Camb. ii. 12. In Welsh, Cross-Oswald.

² "The field of Mesafeld was whitened with the bones of the saints." This is, doubtless, the fragment of a ballad found in later chronicles.—Hen. Hunt. i. 3; Mon. H. B., p. 721.

³ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 12.

⁴ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 6; Sim. Dunelm, on a, 774; Mon. H. B., p. 664.

and we can imagine with what depth of sorrow it would be received by the bishop and his followers. It remained at Lindisfarne until 875, when the monks took it away in the coffin of St. Cuthberht.¹

We can imagine how the tidings would bring sorrow to every Christian heart in England; how the East Anglian would tremble when he heard that the slayer of Sigebert and Egric was again victorious; how the widow of Edwin, in her minster at Lyminge, and Paulinus, safe at Rochester, would think of Hatfield; and, far and wide, priest and convert would tremble for their newly-built churches and mission-stations. Well might they ask if this heathen tempest was to spread from the Solway to the Channel, and uproot the Christian faith. "If such questions," says Professor Bright, "might be a trial to faith in many a south-country

¹ The common representation of St. Cuthberht was holding the head of St. Oswald in his hand. Malmesb. Gest. Pontif. I. iii. fin. p. 275, says that when (in 1104) the tomb of St. Cuthberht was opened in Durham Cathedral, "the head of Oswald, king and martyr, was found between his arms."

church settlement, what must the blow have been to Christians in Bernicia and Deira ? ”¹

Can we wonder that men should think the spot of ground where this hero fell was “greener and fairer” than the surrounding land, and that its soil was sacred dust ; that wondrous virtue came from out his tomb ;² and even the splinter of the stake to which his head had been attached possessed a miraculous power.³ When we consider the issue for which he struggled, we may say with a foreign historian of England, that as “his life was distinguished at once by activity and by a spirit of fervid Christian beneficence, so his Christian merits and his *martyrdom* rendered him a hero of the Christian world.”⁴

¹ See Bright’s “Chapters on Early Church History,” p. 155.


² Bede, ‘H. E.’ iii. 12.

³ This anecdote was told by Willibrord, who had put the splinter into water, which he gave to a plague-stricken scholar.

⁴ Lappenberg, i. 161.

CHAPTER IX.

AIDAN ON FARNE ISLAND.

IDAN occasionally sought rest from the active life at Lindisfarne, and the long mission journeys, and his "retreat," Bede tells us, was on one of the Farne group. The particular islet he selected for his temporary abode is known as the House Island; it is little more than two miles distant from the royal rock of Bamborough, and six from Lindisfarne.

The author of the "Life of St. Bartholomew" describes the island as "a circle of solid rock, the top of which is thinly strewn over with a layer of barren soil. On its south side it is separated from the shore by a channel of about two miles in breadth; to the east and west a belt of rock protects it from the fury of the sea; while on the north it is open to the whole

force of the waves, in the midst of which it lies like the broken and defenceless hull of a shipwrecked vessel. Sometimes, when the tide rises higher than usual, and the wild storms of that rugged coast come to its aid, the waves make an inroad on the land, and the salt foam is blown over the whole island, wetting the shivering inhabitant to the skin, and penetrating the crevices of his habitation."

To see Farne as it was in the seventh century, we must sweep away the tall red lighthouse, with its long reach of white-washed wall, and the three smaller houses which accommodate the lighthouse-keepers and their stores. The little chapel, though it is many hundred years old, was built long after Aidan's time, and Prior Castell's Tower is only a work of the fifteenth century.

The view from the island is interesting and extensive. To the west and north stretches the barren coast of Northumberland; but distance lends enchantment to the view, softening the rugged outline of the sand-

hills, while golden furze and green waving bent serve by their varied tints to mellow and adorn the landscape. Southward lies the little fishing village of North Sunderland, and a low ridge of rocks crowned with the historic ruins of Dunstanborough Castle. If tradition affirms truly, this was once a British stronghold, and would have been a conspicuous feature in the scene in Aidan's day; but no legend of "Sir Guy the Seeker" then invested it with poetic interest, for the Norman fortress was erected at a later date. Far away in the distance, beyond the green slopes of Monkhouse, rise the rounded summits of the Cheviot range; while, as the eye follows the indentation of the coast, the proud embattled pile of Bamborough, like "a watching spirit over these stormy and perilous seas," comes into view. Beyond the gray mass of rock and masonry are the Kylloe Hills, which look down on the valley of the Till; while six good miles away, the long low isle of Lindisfarne breaks the sea-line.

When the wind howled round the desolate

rock, and flying foam was hurled across the strand, when the thunder pealed, and the lightning flashed, and the scream of the wild-fowl mingled with the angry gusts, Aidan would look over the stormy waters and say with the great founder of his sect :—

“Delightful would it be to me . . .

On the pinnacle of a rock,

That I might often see

The face of ocean ;

That I might see its heaving waves

When they chant music to the Father,

Upon the world's course ;

That I might see the level sparkling sands ;

That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,

Source of happiness ;

That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves

Upon the rocks ;

That I might hear the roar by the side of the church

Of the surrounding sea ;

That I might see its noble flocks

Over the watery ocean ;

That I might see the sea-monsters,

Greatest of all wonders ;

That I might see its ebb and flood

In their career.

* * * * *

That contrition might come upon my heart ;

That I might bewail my evils all,

Though it were difficult to compute them ;
That I might bless the Lord
Who conserves all ;
Heaven with its countless bright orders,
Land, strand, and flood ;
At times kneeling to beloved heaven,
At times psalm-singing,
At times plucking dulse from the rocks,
At times fishing,
At times giving food to the poor,
At times in a *carcair*."

* * * * *

With the death of the hero Oswald, the two kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira were shaken apart. Oswin or Oswy, the younger brother of Oswald, succeeded to the sovereignty of Bernicia, and married Eanfleda, a daughter of King Edwin. This prince failed to establish his rule over Deira, which country acknowledged the claims of Oswin, son of the unhappy Osric, whose courtesy and affable disposition soon won the hearts of his people and attracted strangers to his service.¹ Oswy had no other choice, and was forced to content himself with this arrangement, for the ever ruthless, ener-

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 14.

getic Penda, penetrated northward beyond the Tyne, as if he were determined with one dire blow to break Northumbrian independence for ever.

One fair morning when Aidan was on the rocky isle of Farne, this fierce, ruthless, grim invader, now more than sixty years of age, with a host of Mercians as blood-thirsty as himself, appeared before the citadel of Bamborough. This dauntless warrior-victor of Hatfield and Macerfield, and slayer of Edwin and Oswald—endeavoured to take the royal fortress by storm, but the impregnable rock defied all his efforts. So his army scoured the country, tore down the wooden huts of the neighbouring hamlets, and piled the beams and rafters, wattle and thatch, in a huge semicircle round the walls of the castle, which were probably mere stockades of timber. When the wind blew from the south-west, the mass was fired, and high rose the smoke and flame.

Two miles out in the ocean, Aidan stood on the islet of Farne, and saw the leaping flame and clouds of curling smoke rise high

above the fortress-wall, darkening the sky. Raising his hands in an agony of prayer, and looking up to heaven, he exclaimed in horror, "See, Lord, what harm Penda is doing!" Suddenly the wind veered, and, blowing from the opposite quarter, beat back the flames on the assailants who were feeding them. Bamborough was saved! and the heathen host withdrew from assailing a stronghold which seemed to be divinely protected.¹

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 16.

CHAPTER X.

OSWIN AND OSWY.

BEDE dwells with an especial love on King Oswin's character, and the portrait he gives us is certainly one of his best. This fair young king comes before us like another Oswald; open-handed and generous hearted; he won the love of his people by "the royal dignity of his mind, his countenance, and his conduct." No wonder that men of noble birth from many a province should flock together to become "thanes" in the royal hall of the tall and handsome king of Deira.

Aidan loved this prince whose character in so many points recalled to him the likeness of his beloved Oswald. Bede tells us the following story, which is truly characteristic of both Aidan and Oswin.

Aidan was accustomed to travel through his extensive diocese on foot; but Oswin knew that the good bishop had to traverse rough paths, cross bleak and wild moors, and encounter swollen streams and roaring torrents, so he gave him a horse "fit for a king" to ride upon. Soon afterwards a poor man asked alms of Aidan as he rode on his way, and the bishop at once dismounted and with impulsive generosity gave him the horse, with all its fine trappings. The king was vexed with the slight that was put upon his favour, and one day when Aidan was about to dine with him he said, "What did you mean, lord bishop, by giving away the horse that was to be all your own? Had not I many other horses of less value, or other things that would have served as almsgifts?" With Celtic quickness Aidan rejoined, "What say you, O King? Is that son of a mare worth more in your eyes than that son of God?" On entering the hall Aidan took his seat, but Oswin, who was fresh from the chase, stood by the fire surrounded by his thanes. For a time he was lost in thought,

then suddenly ungirding his sword, he gave it to one of the thanes who stood near him, and threw himself at the feet of Aidan and entreated him not to be angry. "Never again will I say a word about this, or judge as to what or how much of our money you bestow on sons of God." Aidan at once rose and lifted up the sensitive prince, telling him that he was not angry, and that all would be well if he would only partake of his dinner and no longer trouble himself about the matter. Oswin at once obeyed, and his face lighted up with a smile. Then Aidan began to be sad, and the tears fell from his eyes. The priest who accompanied Aidan was a Scot, and he asked the bishop in Gaelic, so that no one might understand, what was distressing him. "The matter is," replied Aidan, "that I am sure the king will not live long. I never until now saw a king humble (or perhaps, so humble).¹ It is impressed upon me that he will soon be hurried out of this life; for this

¹ "Nunquam enim ante hæc vidi humilem regem," or "tam humilem."

people does not deserve to have such a ruler."

This story appears to be genuine, but it shows, remarks Professor Bright, a want of good sense on the one side, and an excess of docility on the other. Oswin's objection to the disproportionateness of the gift was not really met by a rejoinder which would make a virtue of indiscriminate generosity.

The prophecy was fulfilled. Deira did lose Oswin. Both Oswin and Oswy were Christians, yet occasions for jealousy sprang up between them, and at last the smouldering fire broke out into the fierce flame of open war between Deira and Bernicia. However, before the two hosts met on the field of battle, Oswin discovered that the King of Bernicia had more auxiliaries than he could gather together, so he determined not to cause unnecessary bloodshed, and broke up his army at Wilfaresdun, a hill about twelve miles north-west of Catterick. Attended by one faithful thane, named Tondhere, he "turned aside" and sought refuge in the house of Hunwald, one of

his nobles,¹ whom he believed was friendly to him; "but, alas, it was far otherwise." His place of retreat was betrayed to Oswy, who sent his "reeve,"² Ethelwin, to put him to death, with the faithful Tondhere. Thus died the "blameless king" at Gilling, on the 20th of August, A.D. 651.

This was the one great crime of Oswy's life, and the deed has left a stain on his otherwise fair fame. Bede tells us, however, that he was stricken with remorse, and at the request of his wife Eanfleda, a daughter of King Edwin, and therefore a kinswoman of the murdered monarch, granted to Trumhere,³ a Northumbrian priest, land⁴ for a convent, to be built on the spot of the murder, in respect for the memory of Oswin, and as an atonement for the guilt of his murderer.⁵

¹ 'Comitis,' a 'gesith;' so Alfred renders.

² "Præfectum suum," see Kemble, ii. 169. The Legend of St. Oswin calls Ethelwin the steward of Oswy's household.

³ Trumhere was akin to Oswin in blood.

⁴ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 24.

⁵ Milman, ii. 243.

The body of the unfortunate king was buried in the chapel of St. Mary at Tynemouth, and now the ruins of the Norman monastery,¹ on its rocky height overlooking the ocean, remind us of a time when "the peace of St. Oswin gave security to all who came within a mile of his tomb."²

¹ After the destruction of the Saxon monastery the bones of St. Oswin were discovered in 1065 (Florence), and a Benedictine monastery was founded soon afterwards.

² Gibson, i. 34.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

AIDAN survived Oswin¹ only a short time, and it is certain that the tragedy had some effect in shortening his life. He had always been on good terms with Oswy, and had obtained for him the hand of Edwin's daughter,² who was then in Kent; he had induced Edwin's grand-niece—the famous Hilda—to settle in Northumbria, and in 649 she became the superior of the nunnery at Heruteu,³ near the mouth of the Tees, on the site of the modern town of Hartlepool, from whence the

¹ Oswin was succeeded by his son Adelwald, on whose death, in 655, the twin-kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira were united under one sceptre.

² See Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 15, 21.

³ See Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 24. The cemetery of this nunnery was discovered in 1833, under a field.

Abbess Heiu retired to another nunnery at Tadcaster.¹

Soon, however, earthly joy and earthly sorrow were to cease for Aidan, and twelve days after the death of Oswin he went to his rest. He was staying at the king's country house, near Bamborough, whence he had so often gone forth on his missionary journeys. Here he was seized with an attack of illness, which came on so suddenly that a tent was hastily stretched against the western wall of the little timber church, and there lying upon the ground, his head resting upon a log which served as a buttress to the church, he breathed his last on the 31st of August, 651.²

A youth,³ who was afterwards to become a famous Bishop of Lindisfarne, and who so well deserved the name of *Saint*, was at this time a shepherd watching his flocks by day on the

¹ Heiu was the first Northumbrian woman to receive the monastic habit from Aidan's own hand. Heiu's nunnery was probably at Healaugh, about three miles north of Tadcaster.

² Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 17.

³ See "Life and Times of Cuthberht of Lindisfarne," p. 60.

green slopes above the Leader, and folding them at night-fall under the Elden Hills. No marvel that, roaming over the solitary moors and through the wild forests which then covered the land, his nightly slumber should be disturbed by strange dreams and visions. On the last day of August, 651, the sunset had faded into twilight, and the twilight had deepened into night. Darkness, like a pall, swathed the hillside, and wearied with their toils, the shepherds slept peacefully. Cuthberht kept vigil alone, when he thought he saw a dazzling radiance shine suddenly out of the darkness, and in the midst of the streaming light a choir of angels descended to the earth and, lo! they were bearing away a soul¹ of exceeding brightness to the heavenly country. This vision made a deep impression on the youthful shepherd, and he deemed that he had received a call to devote himself to a religious life.²

¹ "As in a globe of fire." Anon. Vit. Cuthb.

² Bede, Vit. Cuthb., cap. iv.; Simon Dunelm. de Eccles. Dunelm. cap. iii.; Vita Cuthb., Bede, op. min., p. 262.

A few years later Penda came again, and ruthlessly destroyed both church and village, yet neither that fierce fire, nor another which happened soon afterwards, could burn the post upon which the head of the dying Aidan had rested. Therefore it was placed inside the church as a holy thing, and splinters of it, like those of the cross of Heaven Field, healed many folk of their diseases, "a tale," it has been remarked, "at which we may look in two different humours. We may pass it by with a sneer, and a hypothesis, which will probably be true, that the post was of old heart-of-oak, which is burned with extreme difficulty; or we may pause a moment in reverence before the noble figure of the good old man, ending a life of unselfish toil without a roof beneath which to lay his head; penniless and comfortless in this world, but sure of his reward in the world to come."¹

Aidan's body was taken to Lindisfarne, and interred in the ocean-washed God's acre. But it did not long remain there, for when the

¹ Kingsley's "Hermits," p. 291.

struggle arose between the Celtic and Roman parties in the Church, Colman, the third Bishop of Lindisfarne, would not acknowledge Romish customs, and withdrew to Scotland, taking among his treasures some of Aidan's bones, and ordering the remainder to be buried in the sacristy at Lindisfarne.¹ Thus it appears that some of the bones of Saint Aidan lie interred among the unknown graves of Iona.

When we visit the ancient church in the little village which now occupies the site of the "burgh of Queen Bebb," we assuredly stand upon the ground where Aidan breathed his last; and we love to think of the noble life of the great Northumbrian missionary—the Apostle of the North. Aidan was a true man of God, and one who well deserved the name of *Saint*. He was self-sacrificing, gentle, and brave; a shining light in the Church, a converter of souls, a true model of Christian excellence. Bede, who was born twenty-three years after Aidan's death, takes an evident pleasure in telling us how Aidan lived and

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 26.

worked in Northumbria, although he cannot help speaking against some of his heresies, for the Celtic Church still retained some peculiar customs different from those of the Romish Church, to which Bede belonged.¹

“A man,” he begins, “of the utmost gentleness, piety, and moderation;”² and in subsequent passages he further observes that he was ever earnest in promoting peace and charity, purity and humility, and that he was superior to anger and avarice, and despised pride and vain-glory. Few in history are more conspicuous for their entire unworldliness; few have taught with greater devotion, or been more full of tenderness for all sufferers, or have more sternly reproved powerful offenders.³ Aidan “took pains,” says Bede, “to fulfil diligently the works of faith, piety, and love, according to the usual manner of all holy

¹ Chief among these were the date of celebrating Easter, and the method of cutting the tonsure in a crescent instead of a circle.

² Bede, ‘H. E.’ iii. 3.

³ Comp. Bede, ‘H. E.’ iii. 5, 17.

men,"¹ and, in a word, he "omitted not one of all the duties prescribed in the evangelical, apostolical, or prophetic Scriptures, but performed them to the utmost of his power."²

Few of those men, whom the world has revered as saints, have proved themselves to be more self-denying than Aidan, for we read that when the king and nobles heaped gifts upon him, he gave them away to the poor, or spent the money in ransoming slaves.

The Italian monks who came to England with Augustine were men of foreign speech and manners, and they attempted to Christianise whole kingdoms *en bloc* by converting their rulers. But the Pictish and Irish preachers were men of more Britannic feelings, and they went to work with true missionary earnestness to convert the half Celtic people of Northumbria, man by man, in their own homes.³

The name of Aidan deserves to be held in

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 25.

² Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 17.

³ Grant Allen's "Anglo-Saxon Britain," p. 95.

loving remembrance. His faithfulness to the call of duty was conspicuous among the band of devoted ones who, in that remote day, held their lives cheap if they could carry the Cross among the heathen, and speak the glad tidings which should be "to all people." "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the touchstone by which all character must be tried; and whether we look through the calendar of saints, or among the less pretentious record of the "cloud of witnesses," we shall find few more worthy of our regard than the Apostle of the North. He wandered over our hills and moors, and preached the blessed Gospel of Him who said, "Take up thy cross and follow Me." He, and his brave band of monks, battled with heathenism by confronting it with a life of purity, holiness, and self-denial; and he was one of those who had to prove, as Charles Kingsley wrote, that man is no mere mortal animal, but an immortal soul, and his flesh is meant to serve the spirit, and that pleasure is not the end and aim of his existence. This he did, not by arguing and writing about it,

but by the only way questions can be settled—by experiment.

The great and lasting result of Aidan's labour was the missionary fervour which his zeal created. Was it not from the lips of Scoto-Irish missionaries that the German races outside the Empire, beyond the Danube and the Rhine, first heard the story of the Cross? The Vosges country and the lands of the Upper Rhine, the Upper Rhone, and the Upper Danube, were won to Christianity through the zeal of the Celtic Church of Ireland, and it was chiefly through the energy and burning fervour of Northumbrian men that mid-Europe received the Gospel in the eighth century. It has been hinted that even the great Boniface was born so near the borderland of Wessex and West Wales, that he may well have owed to the Celts of Cornwall his earnest desire to make known the Evangel to distant lands.¹

From Lindisfarne, the Iona of Eastern Britain,

¹ See "Keltic Church and English Christianity," by Rev. William Dawson, M.A., Transactions of Royal Hist. Soc., New Series, vol. i. part iv.

a brave band of Christian missionaries penetrated into heathen Mercia. The Celtic monk Fursey co-operated with Bishop Felix in East Anglia. Cedd came from Mercia into Essex, and when he resolved to set up his "Bishopstool" in the little church near Ludgate, it was from Lindisfarne that he sought consecration.

In the middle of the seventh century, this great Celtic mission, which had sprung from Aidan's labour, seemed as if it would shortly enfold the whole of England. In fact, roughly speaking, the valley of the Thames divided the Latin and Celtic Churches. But an Italian mission, composed of men broader in view than Augustine and his followers, was sent to England; and then these two great Churches worked side by side, until the famous synod on Whitby Cliff, A.D. 664, adopted the Latin custom,¹ and those who claved to Celtic Christianity returned to Iona with Colman of Lindisfarne.²

¹ Bede, 'H. E.' iii. 25.

² Colman was the third Bishop of Lindisfarne; Finian succeeded Aidan.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the English provinces then added to Latin Christendom had been won to the faith of Christ by Celtic missionaries, and that the Celtic Church not only gathered two-thirds of England into her fold, but sent forth the earliest evangelists to Central Europe.

APPENDIX.



I.

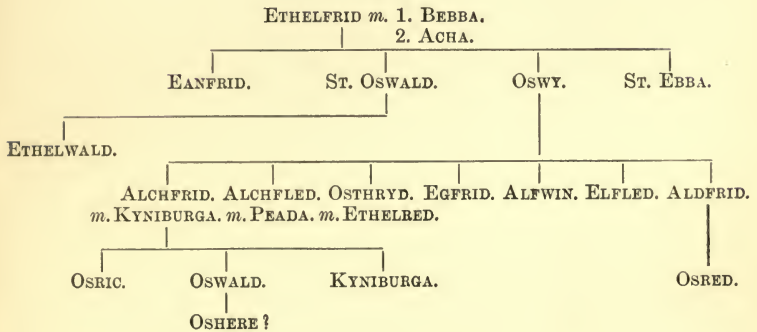
TABLE OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS.

	A.D.
Edwin King of Northumbria,	617
St. Paulinus sent to Northumbria,	625
Penda King of Mercia,	626
Edwin baptised,	627
St. Felix in East Anglia,	631
Battle of Hatfield,	633
Death of Edwin,	633
Eanfrid King of Bernicia,	633
Osric King of Deira,	633
Battle of "Heaven Field,"	634
St. Oswald King of Northumbria,	634
St. Aidan at Lindisfarne,	635
Battle of Macerfield,	642
Oswy King of Bernicia,	642

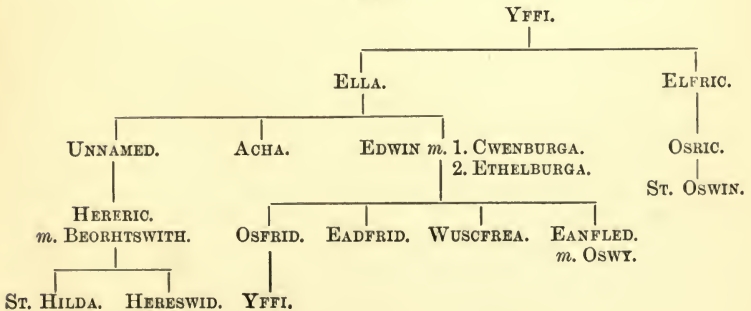
	A.D.
Oswin King of Deira,	642
St. Hilda, Abbess of Heruteu,	649
Deaths of King Oswin and St. Aidan,	651
Oswy sole King of Northumbria,	651
Penda baptised,	653
Mission to Mid-Angles,	653
Second Mission to Essex,	653
Cedd Bishop of East-Saxons,	654
Battle of Winwidfield,	655
Diuma Bishop of Mercia,	656
Colman succeeds Finian at Lindisfarne,	661
Conference at Whitby,	664

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I.



II.



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